

Strategic Plan will Guide Tourism Programming for 5 Years & Beyond

Tourism and recreation in Montana stand at an historic moment. Decisions made – and actions taken – in the next five years will affect Montana’s environment, its economy and its citizens for decades. Those decisions and actions must be strategic, and they must be consistent with the values and priorities of Montanans. As the state faces perhaps the largest tourism event in years – the Lewis & Clark Expedition Bicentennial – this Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan will become the guide for all tourism and recreation leaders as they develop plans and programs for the Bicentennial years and beyond. There is much at stake.

Strategic Plan Defines Role of Tourism in Montana’s Overall Economy

Tourism is Montana’s second largest industry, generating \$1.7 billion annually and making it an essential leg of Montana’s economic stool. Tourism development strategies must be informed by – and integrated with – all of Montana’s economic and natural assets (Figure 1.1). Agriculture, ranching, mining, forestry, technology, manufacturing, construction and education are other legs of Montana’s economic stool. Therefore, this Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan was developed in the context of tourism’s role in Montana’s overall economic picture. Moreover, the Strategic Plan is not merely a set of goals and list of actions. It begins with a strategic framework – an overarching context for the recommended actions – and ends with quantifiable objectives that include ways to measure results.

This is the third 5-Year Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan developed by the Department of Commerce as part of a long-term planning process that began in 1991. The first plan was completed in October 1992, following statewide research and outreach to private and public sectors via surveys and planning workshops. A vision statement was defined, twenty specific goals were grouped into four major goal areas, and actions were identified for each goal. Public and private sector organizations used the plan to guide tourism development and promotion policies, programs and activities. In 1996, the process continued with an update of the 1992 plan to cover the years 1998-2002. The 1998 update identified a vision statement, twenty-three goals grouped into five theme areas, sixty-two action areas, and organizations responsible for implementation of the action areas. An accompanying Action Booklet summarized the action areas by responsible organization. Midway through the five-year time period (November 2000), a mid-term report was prepared to evaluate progress on the action

Chapter 1: Introduction

- ❖ Project Context & Purpose
- ❖ Planning Process

The 2003-2007 Strategic Plan will guide tourism & recreation in Montana for 5 years & beyond. There is much at stake.

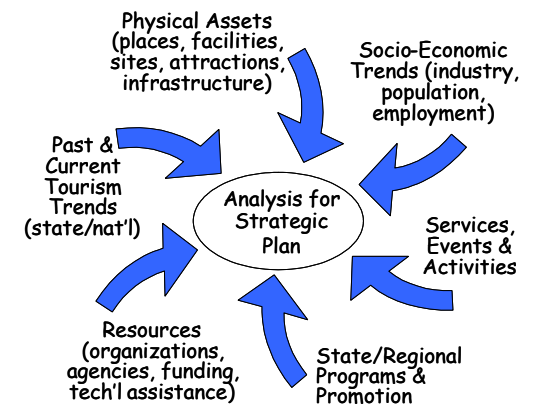
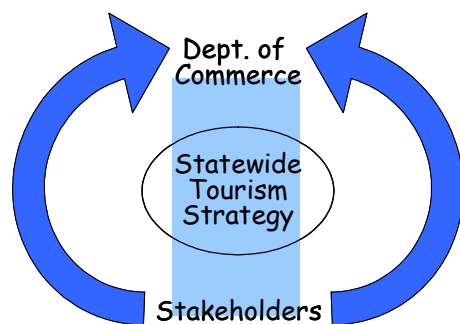


Fig. 1.1: Info-Gathering Process

*There is no shortage of opinions
about tourism in Montana.*

**Strategic Plan Public Outreach Efforts
included the Following:**

- 8 public meetings (Kalispell, Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, Miles City, Glasgow, Bozeman and Butte)
- Meetings with industry and stakeholder groups
- Presentations to TAC, MTRI, regions/CVBs and Governor's Conference on Tourism (in October 2001, and February, April, June and October 2002)
- Online survey of representatives from 75 stakeholder groups
- Direct communication with stakeholder representatives
- Public comment period



**Fig. 1.2: Information Flow for
Tourism Strategy**

areas identified in the strategic plan. The booklet indicated actions that had been completed or not completed, along with comments about each action.

This 2003-2007 Strategic Plan builds on the work completed in the first two plans, and is designed to be action-oriented – to address “what, why, how, where, when, who and how to pay for it”. To be implement-able, the Plan includes not just strategies and actions (“what” and “how”), but also priorities, timeline, responsibility and resources to support implementation. It is not designed to sit on the shelf and gather dust – it is intended to be a dog-eared, page-worn implementation blueprint and reference tool for Montana’s tourism and recreation stakeholders. It focuses on building teams to fully integrate tourism and recreation into Montana’s overall economic development efforts.

The Planning Process was Inclusive and Multi-Faceted

This Strategic Plan contains many “fingerprints” – the ideas, concerns, input and wisdom of Montanans from many communities, sectors and organizations. Successful implementation will require the strategic cooperation and assistance of these partners. Stakeholders included private businesses, regional tourism organizations, chambers of commerce, convention & visitors bureaus, state and federal agencies, universities and colleges, tribes, heritage and cultural organizations, sportsmen’s and conservation groups, and elected officials.

There is no shortage of opinions about tourism in Montana. This Plan was developed based on the principles of community-based strategic planning, involving partners at all levels in a collaborative planning process. Therefore, Montana’s Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan was driven by local and regional grass-roots planning efforts and needs, which then were woven into statewide strategies and priorities. The Plan reflects local values and priorities regarding tourism development, potential impacts, long-term economic diversification and promotion.

The planning team began by tapping the expertise and strategic insights of Department of Commerce staff, Tourism Advisory Council members, university, state and federal agency representatives, and statewide cultural, sportsmen’s and conservation organizations. These individuals provided “big picture” perspective on statewide programs, priorities, trends, issues and political realities. The “big picture” information was used to inform discussions with local and regional groups through public outreach. Then the input from local and regional groups, in the context of the “big picture”, was used to develop an integrated Strategic Plan (Figure 1.2).

A four-phase planning process was used to complete Montana's Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan. The phases, steps and timeline are summarized below and in Table 1.1.

I. Orientation and Information-Gathering

- A. Meetings with Client Team to clarify objectives, scope, outcomes, timeline
- B. Obtain state & regional planning documents, updates of data for 2000/2001

II. Evaluate Current Conditions: Supply & Demand

- C. Evaluate Montana's tourism and recreation "product", or assets: infrastructure, facilities, events, attractions, promotion/communication system, resources, key issues, opportunities, impacts, challenges and threats
- D. Review research data about current travelers in Montana and trends from 1990-2001
- E. Review data about surrounding states, national/international trends, Department of Commerce (DOC)/Travel Montana (TM) programs and marketing efforts, markets, competition

III. Engage Stakeholders in Development of Strategic Plan

- F. Solicit input about local/regional priorities and needs: 8 public meetings, online survey of stakeholders, meetings with industry/agency/tribal/nonprofit groups, presentations to Tourism Advisory Council (TAC), Montana Tourism & Recreation Initiative (MTRI) and Governor's Conference, public comment period

IV. Develop Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan

- G. Develop draft vision, guiding principles, strategic framework, goals & objectives, evaluation methods; present to TAC, stakeholder groups
- H. Based on input, develop draft Strategic Plan; distribute for public comment
- I. Refine and complete final Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan for 2003-2007

Strategic Plan Focuses on Supply & Demand, Ways to Address Challenges & Opportunities

- ♦ *Executive Summary*
- ♦ *Chapter 1: Introduction*
- ♦ *Chapter 2: Existing Conditions*
- ♦ *Chapter 3: Markets*
- ♦ *Chapter 4: The Strategy*
- ♦ *Chapter 5: Objectives & Actions*
- ♦ *Chapter 6: Implementation & Action Table*
- ♦ *Appendices: Resources, Reference Materials, etc.*

Table 1.1: Strategic Planning Process Steps & Timeline, 2001-2002

Planning Element	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Meet w/ DOC/TM Team, TAC, MTRI	■												
8 Public Meetings	■	■											
Information-Gathering	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■					
MIKA, MOGA Conferences		■		■									
Draft Vision/Framework/Goals			■	■									
Meet w/ TAC, MTRI; Refine					■	■							
Online Survey/Comments, Refine						■	■	■					
MTRI Meeting, GOV's Conf; Feedback							■	■					
Develop Draft Plan Actions/Elements								■	■				
Meet with TAC, MTRI									■				
Write Draft Plan, Client Input, Refine								■	■	■	■		
Public Comments, Refine												■	
TAC Meeting, Adopt Final Plan													■

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